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CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE, OF TEXAS

STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION TO

H.RES. 895
(OXLEY RESOLUTION)

JUNE 28, 2006

I thank the gentleman for yielding. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to H. Res. 895, the Oxley Resolution. I support efforts to identify, track, and pursue suspected foreign terrorists and their financial supporters by tracking terrorist money flows and uncovering terrorist networks. But it does not serve the nation well to condemn the media for performing its watchdog function even in a time of war. Indeed, it is especially important during wartime that the media be even more vigilant and aggressive in informing the public. I do not support the resolution because it encourages the media to

become lapdogs who see their role as cheerleaders for the Administration rather than as watchdogs who exist to safeguard the public interest.

During the 1790s under the Alien and Sedition Acts, and then again during the Civil War and World War I, the government prosecuted journalists. Today, we are again hearing government officials calling for prosecution of journalists who report on the conduct of the global war on terrorism and the war in Iraq and disclose to the American public information which the Administration would rather the American people not know. Some even accuse journalists who do so of treason.

But what these self-styled media critics fail to understand is that the American people have a need for a free press to check the excesses of government, and never more so than today.

Mr. Chairman, the resolution declares, without any proof or evidence, that the House of Representatives “finds that the Program has been conducted in accordance with all applicable laws, that appropriate safeguards and reviews have been instituted to protect civil liberties, and that Congress has been appropriately informed and consulted and will continue Program oversight.”

This is a major flaw in the resolution. Affirming as fact claims that are not nothing more than unsupported assertions is neither persuasive nor in

the best interest of the Congress and the country. Rather, it is merely argument by *ipse dixit*. Today the Supreme Court ruled that the Administration overstepped its bounds regarding Guantanamo Bay detainees. Who's to say that the Administration has not overstepped boundaries in the area of domestic spying as well? The fact is we simply do not know. We do not know because this Republican-led Congress has been derelict in its Constitutional duty of oversight.

Mr. Chairman, as a senior member of the Homeland Security Committee, I support efforts to identify and track down terrorists and oppose the leaking of classified information. But I will not play politics with this nation's security. Nor will I support the majority's trampling on liberty and freedom of the press.

Most disconcerting is the chilling effect this ill-conceived resolution will have on the press. In the words of one of our distinguished founding fathers, George Mason, "The freedom of the press is one of the greatest bulwarks of liberty, and can never be restrained but by despotic governments."

I oppose the resolution and urge its defeat. Thank you. I yield back.